GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
FINANCE
LOK SABHA

STARRED QUESTION NO:368
ANSWERED ON:18.08.2000
SMUGGLING AT ATTARI BORDER
RAGHUNANDAN LAL BHATIA

Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether smuggling is carried out at Attari Border by `Sawari` operators;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether it is also a fact that the Deputy Commissioner of Attari had submitted a report to the Ministry in December 1998 inthis regard; and

(d) if so, the details thereof and the action taken thereon?

Answer

MINISTER OF STATE (REVENUE) IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI V. DHANANJAYA KUMAR)

(a) to (d): A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

STATEMENT IN REPLY TO LOK SABHA STARRED QUESTION NO. 368 FOR ANSWER ON 18.8.2000

(a) & (b): The intelligence/reports currently available do not indicate that smuggling is being carried out at Attari Road by `Sawari Operators`. However, in the recent past, there had been reports from time to time that some of the passengers travelling on Samjhauta Express plying between India and Pakistanwere misusing the facility of free Baggage Allowance to bring baggage in commercial quantities i.e. in excess of the permissible limit under the Baggage Rules. For the passengers involved in such activity, the necessary finance for procurement of goods, payment of Customs duty and other dues payable on such goods and subsequent disposal of the goods was reportedly arranged by certain other persons known as `Sawari Operators`, with the help/connivance of local agents/railway porters. The passengers indulging in such activity reportedly received some remuneration for acting as a carrier. However, with the tightening of controls such as imposition of heavy redemption fine and penalty coupled with stringent preventive measures has greatly reduced misuse of Baggage Allowance facility by the passengers.

(c) & (d): Yes, Sir. A report in this regard was sent to the Ministry by the then Deputy Commissioner of Customs, Amritsar, inMarch 1999. The report, inter-alia, indicated the activities and modus operandi adopted by certain Sawari operators for smuggling of contraband goods, through Samjhauta Express. In pursuance of the said report, the Government have taken a number of preventive measures, in consultation with the Ministry of Home Affairs and Ministry of Railways to tighten the controls on passenger clearance at Attari Rail, Amritsar and to prevent bringing in of goods in commercial quantity/smuggling of contrabands by passengers. Anti-Smuggling and Vigilance set up of the Customs Department at Amritsar has also been strengthened. Some of the important measures taken in this regard are as under:

(i) Ban on entry of Railway Coolies at Platform No. 2 & 3 of Attari Rail, Amritsar;

(ii) Entry of Sawari Operators or their agents at Attari village is kept under strict watch with the help of local Police;

(iii) Joint manning of all the exit gates by the Customs, RAW & IB officials to guard against any nexus of the employees of enforcement agencies with Sawari operators;

(iv) Holding of regular joint coordination meetings between the officials of various enforcement agencies posted at Attari Rail such as Customs, Immigration, IB and Police;

(v) Installation of 4 X-Ray Baggage machines for screening the baggage;

(vi) 100% physical examination and screening through Baggage X-Ray Machines of the baggage imported by incoming passengers;

(vii) Imposition of 100% Redemption fine and 25% personal penalty under the Customs Act, 1962, on the baggage imported in excess of the permissible limits under the Baggage Rules;

(viii) Reduction of free baggage allowance from Rs. 12,000/- to Rs. 3,000/- in respect of passengers and tourists coming from Pakistan by Land-route; and

(ix) Joint Rummaging of Samjhauta Express by the officers of Customs, GRP & Immigration.